

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 PM-03 PRS-01 OMB-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 RSR-01 /055 W

----- 030918

R 230957Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2702

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 8830

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH SIRIK MATAK ON INTERNAL POLITICAL
DEVELOPMENTS

REF: PHNOM PENH 8786

1. MY CONVERSATION WITH SIRIK MATAK AUGUST 22 PERMITTED
ME TO RESTATE OUR POSITION THAT THE HIGH POLITICAL
COUNCIL SHOULD BE PRESERVED AND CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT
KEPT TO A MINIMUM DURING THE CRITICAL PERIOD AHEAD. I
NOTED THE POSSIBILITY OF A NEW ENEMY OFFENSIVE AGAINST
PHNOM PENH, THE LIKELIHOOD OF A PRO-SIHANOUK STANCE
BY THE NON-ALIGNED NATIONS CONFERENCE IN SEPTEMBER, AND
THE CONVENING LATER THAT MONTH OF THE UNGA, WHERE A
CHALLENGE TO GKR CREDENTIALS COULD OCCUR. POLITICAL
STABILITY AND AN APPEARANCE OF SOLIDARITY IN PHNOM
PENH, I STRESSED, WERE HIGHLY DESIRABLE THROUGHOUT THIS
PERIOD.

2. SIRIK MATAK ASSERTED HIS FULL AGREEMENT WITH THIS
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POSITION AND MADE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

A. HE HAS URGED IN TAM TO REMAIN IN HARNESS AS PRIME MINISTER AND IS PLEASED THAT HE HAS APPARENTLY AGREED TO DO SO, HOWEVER DIFFICULT AND INEFFICIENT THE PRESENT WORKING RELATIONSHIPS ARE.

B. THE SOCIO-REPUBLICAN AND REPUBLICAN PARTIES HAVE A DIALOGUE UNDER WAY AND ARE SEARCHING FOR A CONSENSUS, BUT NONE HAS BEEN REACHED.

.. THE PRESENCE OF MARSHAL LON NOL IS ON BALANCE HELPFUL AT THIS STAGE DESPITE HIS CONTINUING DISRUPTIVE INTERVENTIONS IN MILITARY AFFAIRS; BUT HIS EVENTUAL DEPARTURE ON MEDICAL CONSULTATIONS WHEN THINGS ARE CALMER COULD FACILITATE NEGOTIATIONS.

D. ALTHOUGH HIS ORGANIZATIONAL BASE HAS BEEN PARTIALLY FRAGMENTED, BGEN LON NOL REMAINS A THREAT TO POLITICAL STABILITY AND SHOULD NOT RPT NOT BE PERMITTED TO RETURN TO CAMBODIA IN ANY NEAR TERM.

E. RESPECTING THE OPERATIONS OF THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL, MATAK SAID THAT A MEETING ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 22 HAD BEEN DEFERRED BECAUSE IN TAM WAS ON A TRIP OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL. MATAK SHOWED NO GREAT CONCERN THAT THE COUNCIL HAS NOT MET FOR OVER A WEEK AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IT WOULD MEET TODAY (AUGUST 23)

3. COMMENT. IF LON NOL AND SIRIK MATAK ARE IN DACT PLOTTING TOGETHER AGAINST CHENG HENG AND IN TAM, WITH THE DEMISE OF THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL AS THEIR OBJECTIVE, IT WAS NOT AT ALL APPARENT FROM THIS CONVERSATION, DURING WHICH MATAK TOOK EXPECTED STANDS ON THE TOPICS DISCUSSED. WHATEVER HIS AMBITIONS, MATAK IS MORE AWARE THAN LON NOL OF THE INTERNATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS OF DOMESTIC KHMER RIVALRY AND IS NOT LIKELY TO WANT TO TAKE OR SHARE BLAME FOR SCUTTLING THE COUNCIL. THE LATTER REPORTEDLY MET TODAY, AS MATAK PREDICTED IT WOULD.

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